



Critical Temperatures for Food Service

The following temperature guidelines, based on the federal Food and Drug Administration's 2009 Food Code, apply at various stages of food preparation and serving. Strictly maintaining these temperatures is particularly important when dealing with potentially hazardous foods. These foods, which favor bacterial growth, include meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, dairy products, cut melon, raw seed sprouts, garlic-in-oil mixtures, cooked rice or potatoes and others.

Remember the danger zone: 41° F - 135° F. Potentially hazardous foods exposed to this temperature range for a cumulative total of more than 4 hours are not safe to eat.

Receiving

Refrigerated potentially hazardous foods	41° F or below
Frozen foods	0° F or below

- Check temperatures of food upon receipt and reject any potentially hazardous foods that fall outside of accepted ranges.
- Put perishable foods away promptly.

Storage

Refrigeration (air) temperature	38° F or below
Refrigeration (food) temperature	41° F or below
Seafood	30° F - 34° F
Fresh produce	41° F - 45° F
Deep chill	26° F - 32° F
Freezer (food) temperature	0° F or below
Dry storage	50° F - 70° F

- Use open shelving and do not cover food with foil.
- Check foods in multiple locations throughout a cold storage area; temperature may not be uniform.
- For ready-to-eat foods prepared on-site, label and comply with storage time standards (seven days maximum for food held at 41° F or below).

Thawing

In the refrigerator	41° F or below
Under running water	70° F or below (water temperature)

- Do not thaw at room temperature.
- If a microwave is used to thaw food, the food must be cooked immediately after thawing.

Cooking

Beef roast	145° F for minimum of 3 minutes or
	140° F for 12 minutes or
	130° F for 121 minutes
Beef, steaks, pork, ham, fish, seafood (filets, chops or intact pieces), bacon	145° F for minimum of 15 seconds
Ground beef or pork, chopped/flaked meat	155° F for minimum of 15 seconds
Poultry, stuffed foods	165° F for minimum of 15 seconds
Eggs	
Cooked to hold	155° F for minimum of 15 seconds
Cooked to order	145° F for minimum of 15 seconds
Foods cooked in microwave	165° F, hold for minimum of 2 minutes
Fruits, vegetables	135° F (no minimum time)

- For combination dishes, choose the ingredient with the most stringent standard and follow it.
- Measure temperature in the thickest part of the food.

Cooling Potentially Hazardous Food

From hot temperature	Cool to 70° F within two 2 hours; cool to 41° F or below within 4 more hours (6 hours total)
From room temperature	Cool to 41° F within 4 hours

- Do not cool at room temperature.
- Use a blast chiller or ice bath to hasten cooling.

- Divide food into small units or use a shallow pan.

Holding

Hot food	135° F or above
Cold food	41° F or below

- Keep food covered.
- Stir hot food frequently.
- Store utensil in food.
- Take actual food temperature; do not rely on a thermostat setting.
- Check temperature frequently (at least every 2 hours).
- Do not use hot holding equipment to heat or reheat food.

Reheating

Leftovers	165° F minimum
Cold food	41° F or below

- Food must reach temperature within 2 hours.

More Useful Temperatures

Handwashing water	110° F
Sanitizing solutions (heat)	170° F for minimum of 30 seconds
Sanitizing solutions (chemical)	75° F - 120° F

To learn more about foodborne illness and ways to prevent it, talk to your health care professional, your local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health, Division of Food, Drugs and Dairies.

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